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Designers Inspire Clothes-Conscious Coed

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Clothes may not make the woman, but a new dress does give us new spirit, self confidence and poise. In an outfit we know is smoothly good looking, we feel ready to meet the world.

In answer to women’s desire to be attractive, the fashion industry came into existence. When the career of fashion designing opened, it brought fame to many ingenious, artistic men and women.

Under the old French monarchies, the extravagant desires of the queens and the court beauties attracted designers to that country. Paris became the fashion center of the world, and still holds that place today.

Outstanding among modern French designers is Madeleine Vionnet, called the “poor woman’s dressmaker.” Unchanging in cut, the simple classical lines for which she is famous may be worn for several seasons without going out of fashion. Vionnet began her dressmaking career as a cutter and fitter. When she opened her own house she perfected the science of cutting and fitting, giving us the bias cut dress—the first really simple dress that was not so simple in cut. Her clothes are famous for geometrically following the structural lines of the body.

The creator of gowns that cannot be copied, she has organized the French Association against copying, known as the Protection Artistique des Industries Saisonniers. Today she is the greatest of the traditional dressmakers, using simple fabrics that drape and cling and marvelous, subtle colors that are dyed especially for her.

Gabrielle Chanel’s shop on the Rue Cambou, opposite the Ritz in Paris, appeals to her feminine clientele with clothes that are essentially young. Chanel designs for smart women who desire to express individuality in the clothes they wear. She put women into sweaters and scarves and neat, wearable daytime clothes.

As well as designing her own fabrics and manufacturing them in her own mills, she was one of the first designers to manufacture her own perfume. Famous for the softness of her evening clothes and the subtlety with which she combines the elegant and the simple, Chanel is jewelry-mad; the fashion of wearing two or three necklaces and bracelets at once is hers.

Jean Patou is a gambler and showman, essentially Parisian in his designing, with one of the largest establishments of the French couture. He caters particularly to American women and has done much toward popularizing sportswear. In contrast, Patou is dramatic with his black afternoon dress with delicate lady-like white lingerie touches.

The house of Patou usually popularizes at least one color a season. Clever advertising and the attention he gives his clients may be the answer to Patou’s widespread fame and success.

The much talked of Elsa Schiaparelli, one of the most famous of French designers, is an Italian woman who for many years lived in America. Perhaps her understanding of American women accounts for the success of her designs in this country. A sweater shop was her first business venture, and its success was so spectacular that she began designing town and evening clothes.

Her clothes express an unusual and distinctive ingenuity. Schiaparelli loves exaggeration and uses the newest possible materials including cellophane, glass, hard metals, birds and butterflies.

Edward Molyneux was a captain in the English Army. After the Armistice he established his own business. There is an axiom that says of his clothes, “You can choose a Molyneux dress with your eyes shut and be nearly 100 per cent sure of its success.” Unlike Schiaparelli, Molyneux clothes are never startling or conspicuous; they are always well-bred.

His most famous collection is that which he designed for the Duchess of Kent. He created the jacket dress and the dress-sweater coat ensemble both made in the same fabric and sometimes the same color. His clothes are especially popular with the English and American women.

Alix uses fine silks, rayon-jersey and exotic fabrics that mold on the figure or swirl and sway in sculptured folds. It was she who draped a contrasting white apron on the front of a simple black dress to give it a soft molded fullness.